SPECIFICATION

TITLE OF INVENTION:

Automated Issue-Communication Method that Significantly Improves an Organization's Safety Culture and Corporate Forthrightness by Encouraging the Communication of Issues and Concerns, Circumventing Middle-Management Filters while Suppressing "Whistleblower" Creation

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The current invention's methodology promotes organizational openness and communications such as (1) required for the safe operation of critical facilities (including nuclear power plants, industrial facilities, and space agencies) and (2) expected of large corporations where issues of integrity and due diligence are potentially critical to corporate survival. If an effective means of accomplishing these tasks reliably were already available and applied, major disasters, corporate failures, and similar consequences caused by adverse safety cultures and caused by integrity or corruption

issues would likely have been avoided. Thus, it is apparent that this inventive area has not previously been addressed.

In addition to this ongoing prior inventive area void, the current invention's methodology is fundamentally contrarian relative to previous communications and management practices, a contrariness that makes it even less likely that the previous art includes the methodology of the current invention. Moreover, similar to the already stated adverse consequences, the recent and continuing failures and events in critical corporate as well as government organizations also attest to a lack of a means for those workers or employees who need an effective method for raising issues and concerns, specifically exemplified by so-called whistleblowers. Since it is clear by the results that prior practice also does not effectively deal with this worker or employee issue-communication problem, the current invention is even more valuable and relevant in that it does deal effectively with this type of problem. Specifically, the current invention provides a means for potential whistleblowers to blow their whistles in a more positive way and with less probability of actually being pejoratively classified as whistleblowers.

The above inventive-void evidence notwithstanding, a search for prior patents potentially related to the current invention resulted in no direct precedent. Also, prior management practices taught in business schools was reviewed, resulting in a realization that much is said but little is accomplished in practical terms toward the goal of "continuous improvement" and the idealistic but here-to-fore unrealistic claim by senior managers that they have "open door policies." An effective implementation methodology of these and related theories has previously been lacking or unachievable, especially in the area of open communications from lower level workers and employers to senior managers.

Moreover, as regards the many inventions involving unique computer codes and telecommunications systems, the current invention's methodology can be and should be implemented using a wide range of software applications and computer or network hardware. That is, an additional advantage of the current invention is that its new methodology can be licensed and fielded using many different software languages, computer designs, and network architectures without violating any specific, previous, automation-related patent. This flexibility makes it possible to field the current invention quickly, with minimal constraints. The only constraints are those needed to allow similar databases to be created to facilitate data aggregation and integration. Since there are many ways to create and use databases, the current invention claims no unique or necessary benefits from previous programming languages or software algorithms that may be patented inventions or methods.

The previous patents reviewed relative to the current invention were determined to be distinct and not related either in purpose or approach to the current invention. To reach this determination, an online search was conducted and identified several computer or computer system patents related to (search words) organization, management, culture, reports, issues, concerns, problems, and safety. Finding such computer related inventions is a result that appears consistent with the fact that the current invention in its most practical form largely relies at least on computer-based automation in general. The potentially most closely related previous patents were reviewed relative to the current invention and are listed and discussed below, with their associated abstracts. The comments are intended to suggest how the current invention is different and distinct in purpose and approach.